The Kent Coast

Coastal Access Report

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4.3 Medway's Coast

4.3.1 Description

4.3.3.1 Medway's coast starts at TQ709758 just to the south of Cliff Fort on Higham Marshes. It extends for 78 km to TQ828671 at the disused wharf at Otterham Quay. It is the second longest coastline in Kent.

4.3.3.2 Approximately 40 km is on PRoWs with a further 4 km on permissive paths. About 34 km is inaccessible to walkers. Nearly all would appear to be excepted land.

The 800m stretch from the head of Yantlet Creek TR867769 to West Lane TQ 875770 may not be a right of way.

Much of the route is along the Saxon Shore Way.

4.3.3.3 The view to seaward at the start is the river Thames and then Thames Estuary. Turning south at Grain the view is the Medway estuary and river. There are extensive areas of saltings and uninhabited islands in the Medway estuary.

The scenery inland at the start is flat over extensive reclaimed saltmarsh. It is very remote. There are a few small sandy beaches (covered in litter). Allhallows-on-Sea is a holiday village. The Yantlet Firing Range on Lees Marshes makes this part of the coast inaccessible. Grain has quite an attractive waterfront but with a power station, container port and large industrial area much of the Hoo peninsular is inaccessible to walkers.

The north bank of the Medway estuary is agricultural except for the imposing Kingsnorth Power Station. From Hoo the bank of the river is wooded but from Upnor the scenery becomes urban, commercial and industrialised.

At Rochester there is a regeneration area where access to about 1 km of the waterfront has been created. There is a short riverside walk at Chatham. There is another riverside walk around St Mary's Island.

The Riverside Country Park starts at Gillingham.

4.3.3.4 The start of the walk to the head of Yantlet Creek is along a sea defence bank. The next 5.5 km of coast is inaccessible because of the firing range. The range is bypassed by a section of footpath and road to Grain where there is a promenade. *The path is not a PRoW and may not be de facto access.* The detour around the industrial area of Grain is footpath and then road. The north bank of the Medway estuary is along the sea defence bank again with a detour on bridleways, paths and roads around Kingsnorth Power Station. There is another short stretch of sea defence bank before Hoo Marina. The Saxon Shore Way is along the beach to Upnor and is not passable at high tide (there is an alternative inland route). From Upnor it is mainly urban footpath to Strood. Crossing over Rochester Bridge there is a footpath along the river bank at the regeneration area before roads at Chatham and another short riverside walk. It is road past the Historic Dockyard and then another riverside walk on to and around St Mary's Island. A footpath cuts back across the island to the dock and then it is road to the Strand where there is a good footpath along the Riverside Park.

4.3.3.5 The route includes the RSPB Cliff Pools nature reserve. It also includes part of the South Thames Estuary and Marshes SSSI and the Medway Estuary and Marshes SSSI.

4.3.2 The Route

4.3.2.1 Cliff to Allhallows

Medway's coast starts at TQ709758 on the Thames Estuary just to the south of Cliffe Fort.

The Saxon Shore Way is along the top of the stone faced grass sea defence bank with Cliff Pools on the landward side. It goes around the seaward side of the Fort and through aggregate works, passing under a conveyor, to Cliffe Creek.

The path initially goes through scrub on the south bank of the creek. The Saxon Shore Way turns inland at TQ715769 to leave the coast and bypass Allhallows and Grain. However, a footpath continues along the north bank of the creek to rejoin the Thames. It is a PRoW.

There is a concrete sea wall with a steep grass bank on the landward side. In places it is too narrow to walk along the top and the footpath is along the lower level with no view of the river.

The wall ends at TQ728794 to be replaced by a grass bank for 3 km but resumes at TQ759793.

At Egypt Bay there is a broad grass causeway to the south and it is not necessary to follow the footpath, as shown on the map.

At St Mary's Bay the beach is fenced off.

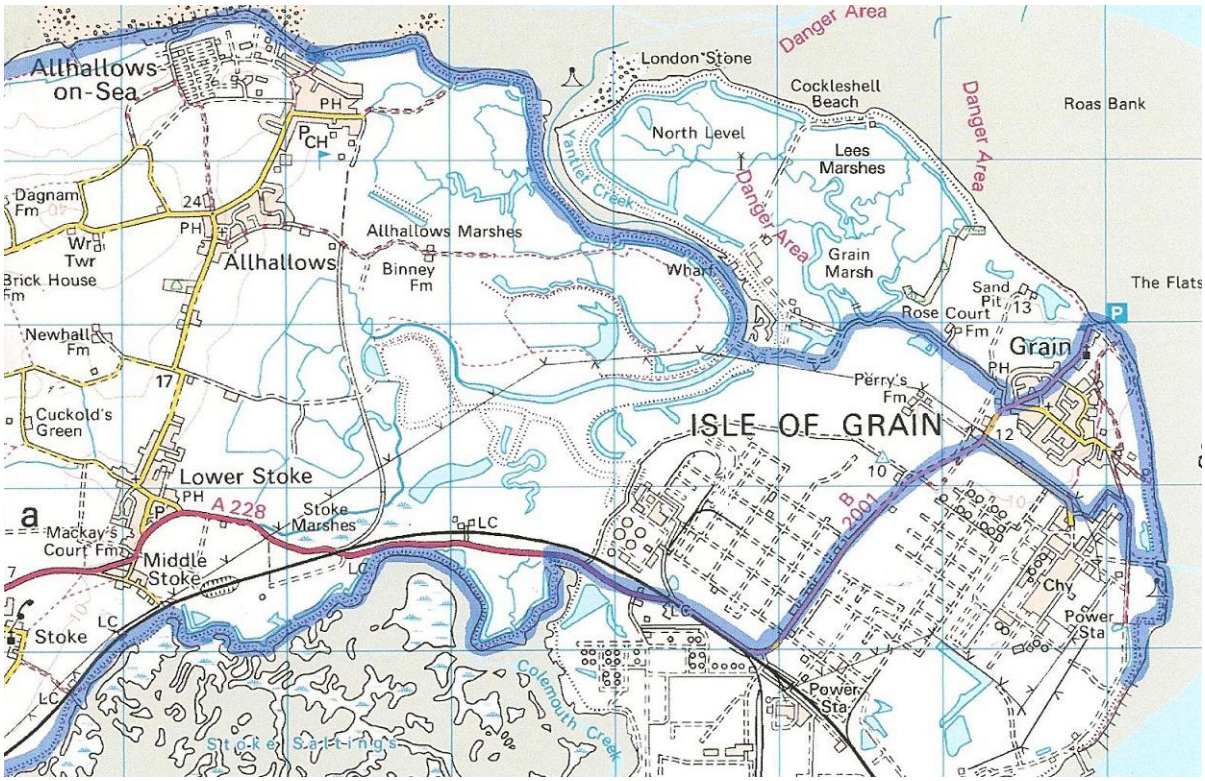
At TQ816783, Dagnam Saltings, the footpath disappears and it is virtually impossible to find without a GPS.

This is because part of it has been eroded and it has fallen into disuse. It is easier to follow the line of the beach.

At the end of the beach there is a fenced surfaced path, in poor condition, inside the sea wall.

This comes out at Allhallows-on-Sea Holiday Park where the footpath is across an open grassed area.

4.3.2.2 Allhallows to Stoke



From Allhallows the public footpath follows along the top of the grass sea defence to the mouth of Yantlet Creek. It is surfaced in places.

Tracing the creek shore inland there is a grass causeway with a surfaced road across the top of the creek at TQ867769. This does not appear on the map as a PRoW and there is a locked Environment Agency gate. *This is however the only foot access to Grain.*

On the other side of the causeway there is another locked gate but turning right down the bank there is fairly well worn footpath around the edge of a field. This leads to a metalled road at TQ875770.

There is a profusion of Danger, Keep Out, Military Firing Range notices in this area which would be daunting to anyone approaching from the other direction.

However, the Danger Area, as shown on the map is relatively small and the fenced exclusion area is much bigger. There was firing of ordnance at the time and It was not possible to find any information as to when it might be possible to walk around the range. Consequently the coast from TQ868769 to TQ885775 has not been walked. It would appear that the same sea defence bank extends around this area.

The metalled road, West Lane, joins the B2001 in Grain.

It rejoins the coast at TQ889769. The footpath which is a PRoW is along the promenade around Grain into the mouth of the Medway.

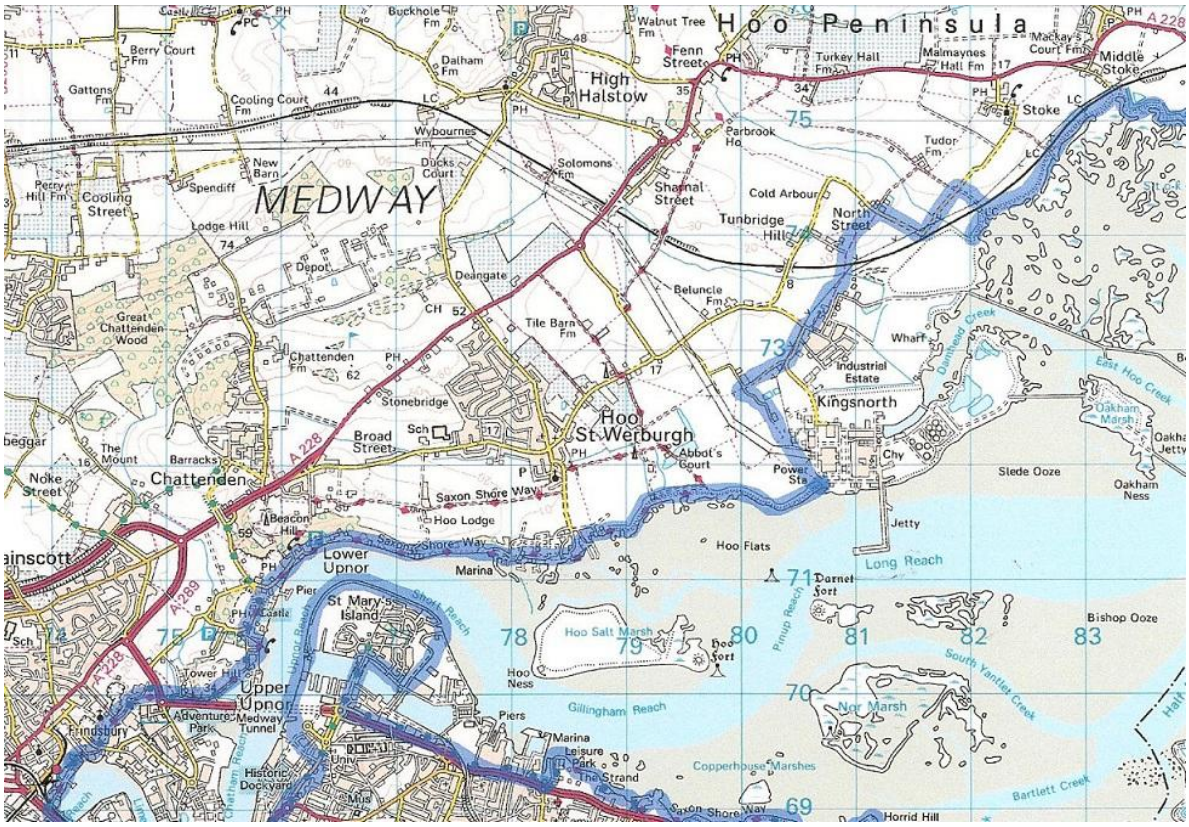
There is a bridge over the power station outfall. The promenade ends at TQ893751 but there are good paths along the sea defence bank to the jetty at TQ888744.

Here the path ends and it is necessary to backtrack and turn inland to rejoin the B2001 Grain Road around the back of the Power Station and Thamesport Container Terminal. At the time the footpaths leading to the road were closed by contractors which did present problems.

There is no option but to follow the road for 4km to rejoin the banks of the Medway at TQ856755.

There is a stile and then a footpath along the top of a broad but winding sea defence bank to Stoke.

4.3.2.3 Stoke to Rochester



The sea defence bank continues past Stoke.

It ends abruptly at TQ820739 at the boundary to Richborough Power Station. There are extensive saltings with small creeks and inlets between the path and the river.

It is necessary to backtrack and climb over locked level crossing gates to a short farm track up to Stoke Road. This is not a PRoW.

Following the road to North Street Farm there is a bridleway off to the left that leads to a road and footpaths around the back of the Power Station complex to rejoin the Medway at TQ807719. The last section of footpath is difficult to find and is not as shown on the map. It is necessary to follow the Power Station fence.

The footpath follows along the top of the grass sea defence bank and rejoins the Saxon Shore Way at TQ7977718.

The bank ends at Hoo Marina.

The footpath wends its way around the back of the marina to Port Werburgh.

The Saxon Shore Way descends on to a shingle beach. This beach is impassable at high tide but there is an alternative inland route.

The woods behind the beach are private and this is a problem to anyone following the SSW who is not aware of the tide. The beach ends at Lower Upnor where there is a short stretch of road beside the river.

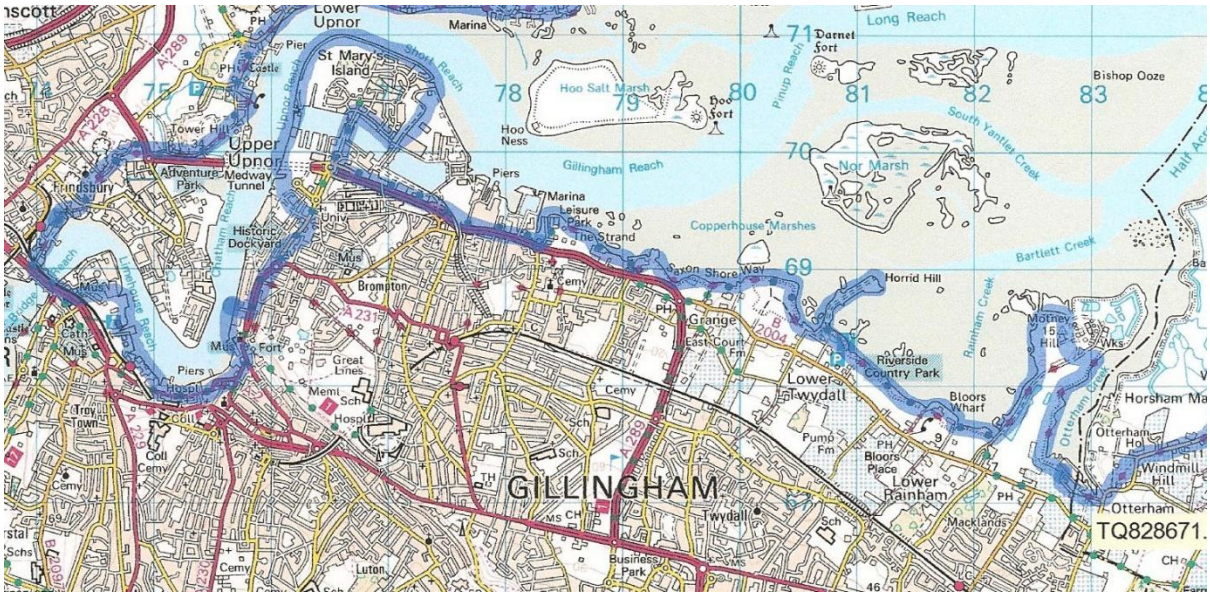
The route follows the Saxon Shore Way inland and uphill around Upnor Castle.

It rejoins the river briefly at Upper Upnor where there is a short section of beach.

It then cuts across the large industrial area of Chatham Ness on the bend of the river.

There is no continuous footpath along the river bank here but there is some access to the river in places. The Saxon Shore Way rejoins the river bank at Strood where there is a new promenade and recreation area.

4.3.2.4 Rochester to Otterham



Crossing the Medway at Rochester Bridge the route leaves the SSW. Turning left under a railway bridge to Gas House Road there is the entrance to the new Riverside Walk and Park.

This area is scheduled for development at some time in the future. In the mean time it has been landscaped.

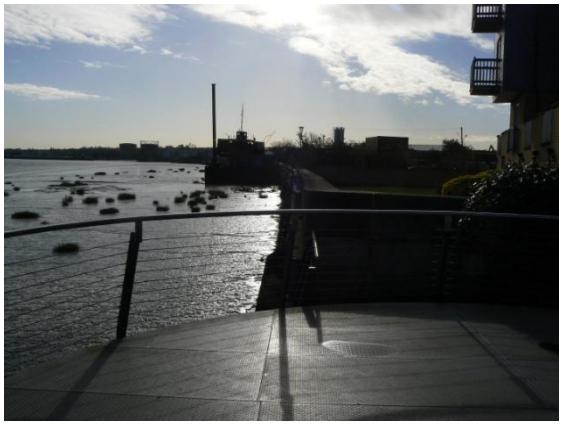
The Walk follows the river bank for about 1 km to TQ750680.

It is necessary to turn away from the river and follow the road to the Pumping Station at TQ757682 where there is another shorter riverside walk.

This ends at TQ758686 with steps leading up to the A231 Dock Road.

This goes past the Historic Dockyard and the next opportunity to get back to the river is through the car park at TQ761698.

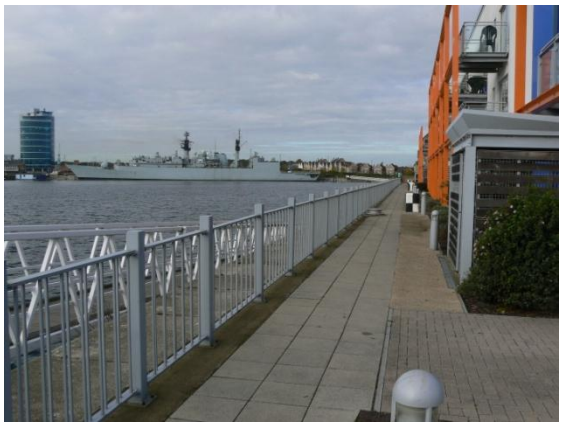
It ends at TQ774706 where the industrial part of the island starts.



This is the start of another river walk which goes over the marina lock to the residential end of St Mary's Island.

Turning inland there is a path over the top of the island, giving views of the river, to the locked basin at TQ770700.

There is the option of a path or boardwalk alongside the dock before turning left along the road off the island.



This joins the A289 which is a busy dual carriageway.

There is a shared cycle/footpath which goes past Chatham Docks and Pier and Gillingham Marina. It is possible to rejoin the Medway and SSW at The Strand at TQ784694

The route follows the river bank going through a boatyard and deviating inland around industrial units at TQ793691.

It comes out at an open grassed area and it is possible to follow the bank back to the quay that caused the diversion.

There is a cinder path along the top of the sea defence bank. The Riverside Country Park starts at TQ798688.

After Sharp Green Bay there is the opportunity for a diversion along the causeway out to Horrid Hill.

There is a very short section of road in the route before the path reaches Bloors Wharf. This is a large disused wharf and it is easy to keep to the riverside rather than take the line of the SSW.

After the wharf the route turns sharp left along a grassed bank beside the road leading out to Motney Hill.

At TQ826686 the SSW goes diagonally across the peninsular.

It is possible to follow a feint path and the shore to the end of the promontory around to the Sewage Works fence.

Coming back across the field from the Sewage Works there are views across to Otterham Creek.

The path is along the bank of the creek.

To Otterham Quay which is now an industrial park

The path goes behind the wharf and wharehouses at the top of the creek to join the road through the industrial estate.

Medway ends at TQ828671

4.3.3 Access Issues

4.3.3.1 St Mary's Bay **TQ792790 to TQ797790** **0.6 km**

The small sand beach here has been fenced off. It would appear to be to keep livestock off the beach where there is a lot of litter. It is a remote area.

4.3.3.2 Dagnam Saltings **TQ816784 to TQ831788** **2 km**

A ProW is shown on the map but it has fallen into disuse. Part of it has been eroded as this area of saltings is unprotected. It is possible to walk along the beach except at high tide.

4.3.3.3 Yantlett Firing Range **TQ867798 to TQ875770** **5.5 km**

This range is used for firing ordnance rather than small arms. It was not possible to ascertain when firing was not taking place.

The path from the top of Yantlett Creek to West Lane is not a PRoW and there are two locked gates. It does appear to be a quite well used route between Allhalows and Grain.

4.3.3.4 Thamesport Container Terminal **TQ892747 to TQ856755** **5 km**

The third largest container terminal in the country. It is secure and would appear to be excepted land.

4.3.3.5 Kingsnorth Power Station **TQ820740 to TQ807718** **5 km**

This is a coal fired power station with unloading jetty. It is a very secure area. Most would appear to be excepted land.

4.3.3.6 Upnor to Strood **TQ770712 to TQ742693** **7 km**

There is access along the beach at Upnor for the first section except at high tide. There are two yacht clubs. It is part of the SSW. There are private woods above the high tide line. The route goes behind the Royal Engineers and Upnor Casle to rejoin the river bank briefly before cutting across Chatham Ness to Strood. Chatham Ness is a large industrial zone. There is some access to the river but no continuous path. Only part appears to be excepted land. There should be scope for a path through the woods.

4.3.3.7 Gashouse Point **TQ742689 to TQ747688** **1 km**

There is a working quay but most of this area is being cleared for redevelopment at some time in the future.

4.3.3.8 Chatham High Street **TQ750680 to TQ757683** **1 km**

The road bypasses the river front which is largely commercial with a couple of piers. There is access to the river in places but no riverside path. This would appear to be excepted land.

4.3.3.9 Chatham Historic Dockyard **TQ757687 to TQ761698** **2 km**

The Dockyard is a major tourist attraction and is pay-to-enter. There is access along most of the dockyard riverbank

4.3.3.10 St Mary's Island **TQ774705 to TQ771701** **1 km**

This is the east third of this manmade island which is industrial with a commercial dock. It would appear to be excepted land

4.3.3.11 Pier Road Gillingham **TQ769699 to TQ784694** **2 km**

This is the road that bypasses part of the Chatham docks, Gillingham Pier, Marina and Gas works. It would appear to be excepted land.

4.3.3.12 Motney Hill **TQ828686 to TQ830682** **2 km**

This is the sewage works which occupies the NE part of the Motney Hill promontory. It would appear to be excepted land.

4.3.3.13 Otterham Quay **TQ626674 to 829671** **0.5 km**

This is the old, now disused, quay at the head of Otterham Creek. It is now industrial units. This would appear to be excepted land.